

Testimony of State Representative Steve Wieckert

Assembly Bill 624 – Neighborhood Watch Volunteer Immunity

*Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice
Room 225 Northwest – January 30, 2008*

Good morning Chairman Kleefisch and committee members. I am pleased to come before you today to discuss Assembly Bill 624, Neighborhood Watch Volunteer Immunity.

We all want to preserve and enhance the neighborhoods in which we live. Neighborhoods around the country have formed neighborhood watch groups which help to ensure the quiet, peaceful, crime free environments necessary to live and raise a family in.

Citizens who care about their communities form the basis of these informal organizations. These neighborhood watch groups work with local police in identifying suspicious activities in their neighborhoods which the police can further investigate. This leads to safer neighborhoods.

This legislation gives immunity to those neighborhood watch volunteers as they participate in neighborhood watch activities and assist the police. This legislation is similar to a Pennsylvania law that has worked well for a number of years. The Pennsylvania law (SS 8332.6) states that the act is "intended to encourage volunteers to contribute their services to reduce the amount of crime and drug use in their communities."

This legislation is supported by:

- Wisconsin Alliance of Cities
- League of Wisconsin Municipalities
- Milwaukee Deputy Sheriffs Association
- Milwaukee Police Association
- Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association Inc
- Wisconsin County Police Association
- Appleton Police Department
- Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association

Thank you. At this time I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.



WISCONSIN ALLIANCE OF CITIES

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October 1, 2007

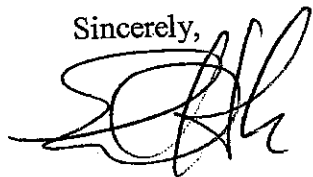
Honorable Steve Wieckert
Wisconsin Representative, 57th District
Capitol 16 West
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Wieckert,

After my review of LRB 3203/1 I am writing offering the full support of the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities. As you know, neighborhood watch has become an important and significant part of a community's efforts to protect property and people. It only makes sense that an individual who in good faith reports "odd" behavior should not be liable for that report.

I hope you introduce your proposal soon. I look forward to working with you on this effort. Thank you again for all of your good work.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Huck,
Executive Director



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October 2, 2007

Representative Steve Wieckert
Room 16 West
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

**Re: Support for LRB 3203/1, Proposed Legislation Providing Civil Immunity for
Neighborhood Watch Members**

Dear Rep. Wieckert:

Thank you for seeking our comments on your proposed bill providing civil immunity to members of neighborhood watch organizations who, in good faith, report information to the police about suspicious activities in their neighborhood. While this issue is not a high priority for us, we do appreciate your efforts to make it easier for citizens to share information with municipal police agencies. Also, the bill may indirectly reduce the risk of municipal liability in such situations. Therefore, we support the proposed legislation.

Thanks for your hard work on this and other municipal legislative issues.

Sincerely,

Curt Witynski
Assistant Director



"...meeting community needs...enhancing quality of life."

POLICE DEPARTMENT

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October 1, 2007

Representative. Steve Wieckert
State Assembly
Room 9 North – State Capitol
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Representative Wieckert:

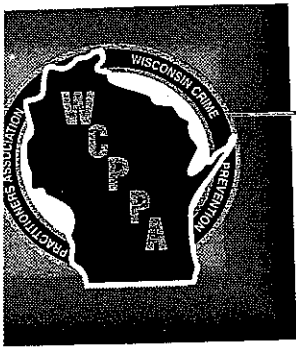
Crime prevention is paramount to improving the quality of life within our communities. Neighborhood Watch is one of the oldest and most effective crime fighting programs in the country, bringing citizens together with law enforcement to deter crime and make communities safer. I write you in support LRB 3203/1, relating to the civil immunity for neighborhood watch members.

As Appleton's Police Chief, I have become acquainted with scores of neighbors within the City of Appleton who participate in our Neighborhood Watch Program. They are enthusiastic in their goal to prevent crime in their neighborhoods, and I believe their actions are making a big impact in driving down crime in our City.

I wholeheartedly support your efforts to move this bill forward and am hopeful your colleagues will recognize the need for such legislation. If I can be of further assistance to you in promoting the passage of this bill, please contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David J. Walsh
Chief of Police



Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association

325 S. Broadway • De Pere, WI 54115 • 920-339-8070

December 14, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:


As President of the Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association with a membership of over one hundred plus crime prevention officers, community policing officers, loss prevention personnel, citizen crime coalitions and others I am writing in support of Representative Steve Wieckert's Assembly Bill 624.

It is imperative that we preserve and enhance the neighborhoods we live in. Citizens who volunteer their time to work with law enforcement personnel to make their neighborhoods safe and secure from crime need to feel they are making a difference and protected by the law working with law enforcement. 2007 Assembly Bill 624 addresses these issues. Citizens who care about their communities and neighborhoods are the catalyst in the neighborhood watch efforts to reduce crime and drug activities in their neighborhoods.

Having worked in the crime prevention field since 1995 and in law enforcement since 1978 it is my belief that neighborhood watch program participants get involved to help reduce crime in their neighborhoods. We educate them in being good reporters, report suspicious activity and other possible illegal activity. We do not teach them to take the law into their own hands, but it does happen. Legislation such as this will only strengthen neighborhood watch programs throughout Wisconsin.

We thank Representative Wieckert for introducing this legislation and taking a tough stance against crime. Working to make our communities throughout Wisconsin a safe place to live and work, and play is the goal we all strive to achieve.

Crime Prevention Coordinator Deputy Steven L. Herman


President, Wisconsin Crime Prevention Practitioners Association
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